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THE THEOLOGICAL CRISIS.

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THE church of Jesus Christ was established on the day of Pentecost by the advent of the divine Spirit in theophany. The divine Spirit came in fulfilment of the promise of the Messiah himself. “It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I go, I will send him unto you. . . . Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.”—(John xvi., 7, 13.) The divine Spirit came in order to remain in the church as the counsellor and guide during the entire Messianic age until the second advent of the Son of God. Accordingly when the Christian Church in all lands and in all ages has expressed its faith “in the Holy Spirit,” it has thereby confessed his presence and divine guidance in the church. All that wonderful advance in Christian life and doctrine that transformed the ancient civilizations, conquered Celtic, Germanic, and Slavonic races, and made Christianity the religion of the world, is an evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Progress in doctrine and life is a necessary experience of a living church ; and that progress will never cease until the church attains its goal in the knowledge of all the truth, in a holiness reflecting the purity and excellence of Jesus Christ, and in a transformed and glorified world.

Those holy men who were guided by the divine Spirit to found the Christian Church and build the first layers of its superstructure, have given sacred writings which must ever remain the rule of faith and life. Holy Scripture presents the ideal towards which the church ever aims with earnest strivings. The Holy Spirit guides the church in its appropriation of Holy Scripture, and this is ever a progressive knowing and a progressive practice, for Christian knowledge cannot advance far beyond Christian life.

I.—THE ADVANCE OF THE CHURCH.

Progress has always been confronted by conservatives and re-

actionaries. Jesus and Paul had a life-long struggle with Pharisees. Every advance in Christian doctrine and the holy life has cost the heroic leaders agony and blood. But the advance has been made in spite of every opposition. The conservative and the progressive forces are in perpetual conflict. They wage a war that will reach its end only in the last triumph of Christ.

The progress of the church is registered in symbolical books, liturgies, creeds, and canons of order and discipline. If the church had submitted itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is possible that its progress would have been normal and its decisions would have been infallible. But in fact human forces have obstructed the free development of Christian doctrine and life. Human passion and strife, violence, oppression, and crime have too often given shape and color to the decisions of Christian synods and councils; and therefore their decisions have mingled God's truth with human errors. We cannot rest with confidence upon the decrees of any ecclesiastical assembly.

"All synods and councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore, they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice; but to be used as a help in both."—(West. Conf., XXXI., 4.)

The ancient controversies that separated the Oriental churches and then the Greek Church from the Latin Church were intensified by human passion and ambition. In all these controversies the doctrinal statements of the Latin Church were real advances in theology; but the unchristian conduct of the leaders of the church brought on those unfortunate divisions which not only sacrificed the unity of the church, but also gave Islam an easy victory over a distracted Christendom, and well-nigh yielded the supremacy of the world.

The Latin Church was in throes of reformation for many generations before Luther and Zwingli. The stubborn resistance to the reforming spirit broke the Latin Church into pieces, and resulted in the formation of a number of national churches over against the Church of Rome. These all defined their position in symbols of faith in antagonism with all other parties. The three great principles of the Protestant Reformation were: 1, the authority of the Scriptures is supreme over the authority of the church; 2, men are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by good works prescribed by the church; 3, men are saved by divine grace,

and not by magical rites and ceremonies. These great principles of the Reformation gave new shape and color to all other Christian doctrines that were looked at from the new point of view.

The Reformers were men of great intellectual and moral vigor. Their doctrines were the expression of their Christian life and experience. But they were succeeded by lesser men who gave their energies to the construction of systems of dogma. These soon enveloped the principles of the Reformation in a cloud of speculations and established a Protestant scholasticism, ecclesiasticism, and ritualism which seemed to earnest men little better than that which the Reformers had cast aside. Accordingly a second reformation arose in Great Britain in the form of Puritanism, which reaffirmed and sharpened the principles of the Reformation and advanced towards a holy doctrine, a holy discipline, and a holy life. The Puritan Reformation passed over to the Continent in the form of Pietism and transformed the churches of Germany and Holland; but in Great Britain the Puritan became puritanical, and the choicest youth, driven from the British universities and educated in Switzerland and Holland, returned with a scholastic theology which soon took the place of the principles of Puritanism.

A third reforming movement arose with Whitefield, Wesley, Edwards, and others, and the doctrine of regeneration and Christian experience became the prominent features of the new advance. But this regenerating force ere long became hardened into a cold and barren evangelicalism.

All of these movements were due to the reviving influences of the divine Spirit, and each of them made marked advance in Christian theology and Christian life. Each advance, however, carried with it only a section of the church, so that the Christian Church of our day, in its divisions, represents every stage of progress since the apostolic times. This should lead to the reflection that these advances, however important in themselves, have not been sufficiently comprehensive and essential to embrace the whole of Christendom. The great verities of the Christian religion are in the Nicene and the Apostles' creeds, wherein there is concord. We stand upon the heights of the last of these great movements of Christendom. We accept all that has been gained in them all. But we recognize that each one of them in turn became exhausted and hardened and stereotyped in a dead orthodoxy, owing to

the reacting influences of conservatism and traditionalism. What is the gain if you substitute, first, Protestant tradition for Roman Catholic, and then Puritan for Protestant, and finally Evangelical for Puritan? The advance is in the principles and in the essential features of the movements. We must distinguish between the essential and the non-essential. As soon as we do this, we see Christendom rising in a pyramid of grace, encompassed by tombs of dead theories and parties, and dreary wastes of human speculation; and we discern that there is but one platform for Christendom—the common consent in the Nicene and the Apostles' creeds. All else is in the sphere of Christian liberty. As Isaac Taylor once said :

"But thus it is, and ever has been, that those who are sent by heaven to bring about great and necessary movements, which, however, are, after a time, either to subside, or to fall into a larger orbit, are left to the short-sightedness of their own minds in fastening upon their work some appendage (perhaps unobserved) which, after a cycle of revolutions, must secure the accomplishment of heaven's own purpose—the stopping of that movement. Religious singularities are heaven's brand, imprinted by the unknowing hand of man, upon whatever is destined to last its season, and to disappear."—"Wesley and Methodism," p. 81.)

We have reached a period in which all the great movements have spent their force, and there are that confusion, agitation, and perplexity which indicate the birth of a new movement that will absorb, comprehend, and carry to loftier heights all that have preceded it. When all the *isms* have been broken off, the jagged edges of controversies will disappear, and Christian parties will fuse into a common brotherhood.

II.—THE REAL ISSUE.

No one can understand the issues involved in the present theological crisis unless he distinguish three things: 1, the doctrine of Holy Scripture; 2, the doctrine of the creeds; 3, traditional dogma. In the evolution of Christian theology the constant tendency is to overlay Scripture and creed with tradition. Every reforming movement must strip off the traditional dogmas from the Scriptures and present the genuine achievement of the church as expressed in its official symbols apart from speculative elaborations. This is the real issue at the present time. There is a rally of dogmaticians and traditionalists against those Biblical and historical scholars who are aiming to dethrone tradi-

tion and put Holy Scripture and the creeds in their proper position of authority in the church.

It must be evident to every thinking man that the traditional dogma has been battling against philosophy and science, history and literature, and every form of human learning. In this battle the Bible and the creeds have been used in the interests of this dogma, and they and the church have been compromised thereby. It is of vast importance, therefore, to rescue the Bible and the creeds from the dogmaticians. There can be little doubt that the traditional dogma is doomed. Shall it be allowed to drag down into perdition with it the Bible and the creeds? The dogmaticians claim that their dogma is in the creed; if we do not submit to it, we must leave the church. They insist that their dogma is in the Bible, and if we do not accept it, we must give up the Bible. Biblical scholars and historical students propose to do neither of these things; on the contrary, to hold up the Bible as the supreme authority for the church; to build on the creeds as the ecclesiastical test of orthodoxy. Traditional dogma is a usurper, and it will be dethroned from its last stronghold in the Presbyterian Church.

Traditional dogma in the Presbyterian Church is chiefly the scholastic Calvinism of the seventeenth century of Switzerland and Holland, mingled with elements from British Evangelicalism of the eighteenth century. But alongside of it is an apologetic based upon the Arminianism of Bishop Butler and an ethical philosophy of the nineteenth century. It is this internal strife between Calvinistic dogma, Arminian apologetics, and rationalistic ethics that has brought on the crisis in the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. Calvinistic dogma has been well-nigh eliminated from the Congregational churches. In the Presbyterian Church semi-Arminianism demands a revision of the Calvinistic sections of the Westminster Confession. The Calvinistic party in the Episcopal Church is a vanishing quantity. The Baptist churches seem to be strong in their Calvinism, but there are signs of weakness in these also.

But the battle between Calvinism and Arminianism is no longer of any practical importance to the Christian world. The vast majority of Christians have settled down into an intermediate position. It may be important to Presbyterians to change the complexion of the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession, but

such a change will have little or no influence upon the currents of modern theology.

The most important questions of our day are not determined in any of the creeds of the church, and are, therefore, beyond the range of orthodoxy. When the church, in its official organs, decides these questions, then for the first time will they enter into the field of orthodoxy. Theological discussion at the present time is, for the most part, above and beyond the lines of denominational distinctions. All Christian theologians are engaged in them, without regard to sect or calling. They centre about three great topics : the first things—Bible, church, and reason ; the last things—the whole field of eschatology ; and the central thing—the person and work of Jesus Christ.

III.—THE SEAT OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

This was an essential question at the Reformation. It has been a fundamental doctrine ever since. There are three seats of divine authority—the Bible, the church, and the reason. Define Bible, church, and reason as you may, in any case God approaches men through each of them. The Christian Church is divided into three great parties—Evangelicals, Churchmen, and Rationalists. But there are many subdivisions of these parties, and not a few who take intermediate positions. The Churchmen make the church supreme over Bible and reason. The Evangelicals make the Bible supreme over church and reason. The Rationalists make the reason supreme. The conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants since the Reformation leaves these two great parties in very much the same relative strength as at the close of the sixteenth century. Two hundred years have shown that the one is not to conquer the other. But in the meanwhile the rationalistic party, which had but few adherents in the sixteenth century, has gained from Roman Catholic and Protestant alike. On the continent of Europe, at least, it is well-nigh equal to either of the others. It seems altogether probable that neither party is to yield in the contest ; there must be some way of reconciliation in a higher unity. All earnest men should strive after such a reconciliation. The historian recognizes that men have found God in the Bible, the church, and the reason. If this is so, it is evident that those who use the three media of communication with God,

and use them to the utmost, will be most likely to attain the highest degree of union and communion with God. It is the opinion of Christian scholars that Socrates and pure-minded heathen have ever found God in the forms of the reason. Why should we deny that a modern Rationalist like Martineau, and seekers after God among the people who are fenced off from Bible and church by the exactions of priest and ecclesiastic, find God enthroned in their own hearts? The divine Spirit “worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth” (West. Conf., x., 3); and though he ordinarily works through Bible and church, yet when these channels of divine grace are obstructed by the rags of human dogmatism, or when by the neglect of the ministry they do not reach forth to the weak, the ignorant, and the destitute, the divine Spirit works without them in the enlightening and salvation of men. When I take this position, I do not deny the Protestant position that Holy Scripture is supreme. I simply affirm that, where Holy Scripture does not work as a means of grace, the divine Spirit may work now as he worked before the Bible and the church came into existence.

When I say that Newman and multitudes of Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Orientals, and churchmen of every name have found God through the church, I agree with the Reformers in recognizing these as Christians, and I do not deny the supremacy of the Scriptures. Where the Scriptures are withheld from the people by ecclesiastical authority, or where earnest seekers after God are driven from the Bible by the dogmas of traditional orthodoxy, how can the grace of God flow to them through the Scriptures? Those who restrain them from the Bible have the blame of keeping them from this gate of the Kingdom of God. The only ways of access left them are the church and the reason. And if they have not been taught to use the reason as a means of access to God, God’s Spirit will make the church an avenue of grace.

It is our contention that each one of the channels of divine grace should be cleared of obstructions; that each one should be made free and open to the use of man. Then, in our opinion, Holy Scripture will rise into acknowledged superiority over them all.

IV.—HOLY SCRIPTURE.

The chief reason why men do not universally recognize the supremacy of Holy Scripture is that the scholastics and tradi-

tionalists have thrust the Scriptures aside, have encased them in speculative dogma, and have used dogmatic theories of the Bible as a wall to fence off earnest, truth-seeking men. We present several of these dogmatic utterances.

"The Presbyterian Church, in unison with all evangelical Christians, teaches that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, having been given by the immediate and plenary inspiration of God, are both in meaning and verbal expression the Word of God to man."

"A proved error in Scripture contradicts not only our doctrine, but the Scripture's claims, and therefore its inspiration in making those claims."

"Every book is genuine which was esteemed genuine by those who lived nearest to the time when it was written, and by the ages following, in a continued series."

"So far as the Old Testament is concerned, those books, and those only, which Christ and his Apostles recognized as the written word of God are entitled to be regarded as canonical. . . . The principle on which the canon of the New Testament is determined is equally simple. Those books, and those only, which can be proved to have been written by the Apostles, or to have received their sanction, are to be recognized as of divine authority."

"If, as one asserts, 'the great mass of the Old Testament was written by authors whose names are lost in oblivion,' it was written by uninspired men. . . . This would be the inspiration of indefinite persons like Tom, Dick, and Harry, whom nobody knows, and not of definite historical persons like Moses and David, Matthew and John, chosen by God by name and known to men."

These are specimens of the statements of the dogmaticians of our day, and of the traditional theories of the Bible that prevail among the ministry. They claim that inspiration is *verbal*; the Bible is *inerrant* in every particular; the *traditional* authors of the Biblical books must have written them; the canon accepted by the *primitive* church must be accepted by us. These dogmatic utterances are insisted upon as if they were orthodox, and yet in fact there is not a creed in Christendom that indorses them; there is no Biblical authority for them; they are purely speculations and traditions, without any binding authority whatever. These dogmas confront a scientific study of the Bible.

1. The critical study of the canon shows clearly that the Christian Church has never been in concord on this subject. The Roman Catholic Church follows the broader canon of St. Augustine and the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. Protestants follow the stricter canon of St. Jerome and the Jewish synod of Jamnia. But not a few of the writings of the stricter canon were disputed by Jew and Christian. And the Christian writers of the ante-Nicene age used as Holy

Scripture several writings which are not in the Augustinian canon. The Roman Catholics build their canon on the authority of the living historical church. The Reformers built their canon upon the authority of the divine Spirit speaking in Holy Scripture to the believer.

"We know these books to be canonical and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the church, as by the testimony and inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from the ecclesiastical books."—(Gallican Confession, IV.)

The modern Rationalists test the canon by the reason. But modern Evangelicalism builds not on the judgment of the nineteenth century, but the judgment of the second and third centuries; not on the authority of the living church, but on the authority of the dead church. It has abandoned the internal divine evidence of canonicity, and destroyed the base of Protestantism. It builds on an uncertain, fluctuating tradition, and in that tradition selects the narrower rather than the broader line.

2. Textual criticism destroys the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Language is the vehicle, the dress, of thought. Thought may find expression in any one of a thousand languages; it may be dressed in a great variety of synomyms, phrases, and literary forms, in any highly-developed language. The form may vary indefinitely, and yet the meaning be essentially the same. The divine communication to the prophet's mind, and the inspiration to give it utterance by pen or tongue, does not necessarily carry with it the inspiration of the tongue in its utterances or the pen in its constructions. No creed in Christendom teaches verbal inspiration.

I shall quote a few English Presbyterians of the seventeenth century, who had great influence in the formation of the Puritan faith.

"All language or writing is but the vessel, the symbol, or declaration of the rule, not the rule itself." "For it is not the shell of the words, but the kernel of the matter, which commands itself to the consciences of men, and that is the same in all languages." "The Scripture stands not in *cortice verborum* but in *medulla sensus*; it is the same wine in this vessel which was drawn out of that." "The Scriptures in themselves are a lanthorn rather than a light; they shine indeed, but it is *alieno lumine*; it is not their own, but a borrowed light."*

These are testimonies of Lyford, Poole, Vines, and Wallis, among the most distinguished scholars of their time. They com-

* See Briggs's "Whither?" p. 66. Chas. Scribner's Sons.

pare the words of Scripture to vessels, symbols, shells, wine-glass, lantern. The divine word is in the contents, the rule itself, the kernel, the wine, the light. Textual criticism finds no difficulty with these ancient divines and their doctrine of inspiration, but it casts off the modern dogma of verbal inspiration as the shroud of divine truth, the grave-clothes of the Word of God.

3. The higher or literary criticism on purely scientific principles determines the integrity, authenticity, literary forms, and credibility of the Scriptures. It works with the same rules that are used in every other department of the world's literature. These principles are : 1. The writing must be in accordance with its supposed historic position as to time, place, and circumstances. 2. Differences of style imply differences of experience and age of the same author, or, when sufficiently great, differences of author and period of composition. 3. Differences of opinion and conception imply differences of author when these are sufficiently great, and also differences of period of composition. 4. Citations show the dependence of author upon author, or authors cited. 5. Positive testimony. 6. The argument from silence.* The application of these rules to the scientific study of the Bible has shown that a large part of the traditions as to authorship, date, style, and integrity have no solid ground. As I recently said in my inaugural address :

"Traditionalists are crying out that it is destroying the Bible, because it is exposing their fallacies and follies. It may be regarded as the certain result of the science of the Higher Criticism that Moses did not write the Pentateuch or Job; Ezra did not write Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah; Jeremiah did not write Kings or Lamentations; David did not write the Psalter, but only a few of the Psalms; Solomon did not write the Song of Songs or Ecclesiastes, and only a portion of the Proverbs; Isaiah did not write half of the book that bears his name. The great mass of the Old Testament was written by authors whose names or connection with their writings are lost in oblivion. If this is destroying the Bible, the Bible is destroyed already. But who tells us that these traditional names were the authors of the Bible? The Bible itself? The creeds of the Church? Any reliable, historical testimony? None of these! Pure conjectural tradition! Nothing more!"—("Authority of Holy Scripture," p. 33. Chas. Scribner's Sons.)

Higher criticism cuts up the dogmatic theory of the Bible from the roots. If the traditional dogma be correct, higher criticism, for all who accept its conclusions, has destroyed the inspiration of a large part of the Bible. The dogmaticians and

* See Briggs's "Biblical Study," pp. 87 seq. Chas. Scribner's Sons.

those who follow them must battle with higher criticism in a life-and-death struggle. They have identified Bible and creed with their dogma, and they are risking everything on the issue of the struggle. But higher criticism has no difficulty in dealing with them. We ask them who wrote the orphan Psalms and the Epistle to the Hebrews. They cannot tell us. Are these books to go out of their canon because they were written by "Tom, Dick, and Harry," whom we do not know to be inspired? And even if we could find authors for all the Biblical books, how can we prove the inspiration of the writers except from the books? And yet we are asked to accept these very books because they were written by these inspired men. On such a vicious circle the dogmatists build their faith.

Higher criticism finds no more difficulty in accepting the inspiration of those great unknown poets who wrote the book of Job and the exilic Isaiah than it does of the prophets Hosea and Micah, respecting whom there is no doubt. The Epistle to the Hebrews is as divine as the Epistle to the Romans; the name of Paul does not add a feather's weight to its authority. We determine the inspiration of the writer from the inspiration of the book, and we determine the inspiration of the book from its internal character and the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in it to the believer. The same Holy Spirit who guided holy men to produce the writings gives assurance to those who use them that they are the Word of God.

"The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God."—(West. Conf., I., 4.)

4. The chief struggle between Biblical criticism and the traditional dogma is about the question of inerrancy. No word of Holy Scripture, no sentence of historic creed, makes this claim for the Bible. It is a theory of modern dogmatists. Biblical criticism finds errors in Holy Scripture in great numbers. These errors are in the circumstantial, and not in the essentials. They do not disturb any doctrine; they do not change the faith and life of the Christian Church. The great reformers, Calvin and Luther, recognized errors in the Scriptures; Baxter and Rutherford were not anxious about them; the greatest theologians of modern Germany, Van Oosterzee, Tholuck, Neander, Stier,

Lange, Dorner, Delitzch, do not ignore them. Where is the German scholar of any rank who denies them? British scholars such as Sanday, Cheyne, Driver, Gore, Davidson, Bruce, Dods, Blaikie; American scholars such as Schaff, Fisher, Thayer, Harper, Smyth, Evans, H. P. Smith, Francis Brown, and hosts of others, frankly point them out. It may be regarded as the consensus of Biblical scholars that the Bible is not inerrant; and yet the dogmaticians insist that *one* error destroys its inspiration. They battle in death-struggle for their dogma because their Bible shares in its defeat. They risk their whole Bible on a single error. One error in citation, one error in natural history, in astronomy, in geology, in chronology, destroys the whole Bible for them. It is now generally admitted that there are errors in the present text, but it is claimed that the original autographs as they first came from their authors were inerrant. But how can they prove this? It is pure speculation in the interest of their dogma. Criticism does not find the number of errors decreasing; they rather increase as we work our way back in the study of manuscripts, versions, and citations, and advance in the critical analysis of the literature. It discredits the entire work of criticism to speculate as to another text than the best one we can get after the most patient and painstaking study.

Biblical criticism pursues its work in a purely scientific spirit. It will detect, recognize, and point out errors wherever it may find them in Holy Scripture. If the Reformers and Puritans, the great Biblical scholars of the past, have maintained their faith in the Bible notwithstanding the errors they have seen in it, it is improbable that the Biblical critics of our day will be disturbed by them. If any one is disturbed, it will be those who have been misled by the dogmaticians to rest their faith on the doctrine of inerrancy. These will ere long find the doctrine a broken reed that will give them a severe fall and shock to their faith, if it does not pierce them to the heart with the bitter agony of perplexity and doubt.

5. The science of Biblical interpretation has been greatly advanced in our day. This advance has dislodged not a few proof-texts of systems of divinity, and destroyed numberless sermons. This in itself excites the hostility of large numbers of ministers to the newer exegesis.

6. The improvement in Biblical history, with its helps, Biblical geography, archæology, natural history, has changed the face of Biblical study.

V.—BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

The most important department of recent Biblical science is Biblical theology. Biblical theology rests upon Biblical criticism. It has to determine the theology of each document by itself, then to compare the theologies of the documents and ascertain those things in which they agree and those in which they differ. This work proceeds through the entire Bible, until at length the unity and variety of Holy Scripture is discerned and then set forth in its entirety. Biblical theology traces the development of every doctrine, every form of religion, and every phase of morals. Nothing is overlooked that is found in the Bible.

Biblical theology is the youngest of the daughters of Biblical science. The writer of this article was, if he mistake not, the first in this country to write upon the subject and to attempt a complete course of lectures upon it.

The study of Biblical theology puts dogmatic theology to a severe test. In Germany it long since forced a reconstruction of dogmatics. The great systematic theologians of our time, such as Dorner, Martensen, Van Oosterzee, Müller, Kahnis, Ritschl, build upon it. But few American dogmaticians have studied it. They persist in methods, lines of argumentation, and a use of proof-texts which have long since been discarded in Europe. The present theological crisis is due largely to the resistance to Biblical theology on the part of the dogmaticians and their pupils, representing the great majority of the ministry, who were trained under the old methods. They have been taught that dogmatic theology is only a systematic expression of the doctrine of the Bible.

But Biblical theology makes it clear that these systems are chiefly speculative, and that, if they were reduced to their Biblical dimensions, their authors would hardly recognize them. Like a big orange, with thick skin and a mass of pulp, they yield little juice. These dogmatic systems neglect large masses of Holy Scripture ; they deprecate some Biblical doctrines of great importance and exaggerate others of little importance, and so the whole face of Biblical doctrine is changed. Let any one study the proof-texts in the indexes of the favorite systems of dogma used in America, and he will at once see the significance of what

has been said. There is a capricious use of the Bible which is the reverse of systematic. There is a piling-up of huge masses of dogma on a few innocent texts, and a brief mention of those comprehensive Biblical statements such as Luther named little Bibles. I yield to no one in admiration of a true systematic theology such as those attempted by Henry B. Smith and Isaac A. Dorner, Martensen, Kahnis, and Van Oosterzee. These theologians aim at a complete system built upon philosophy and science, Bible and history, church and creed. But those American dogmatic systems that deprecate the reason and then go to extremes in dogmatic speculation; that ignore Biblical theology and then search the Bible with a lantern for props for their dogmas; that turn their backs on the historical church and institutional Christianity, and then chase every shadow of tradition that may seem to give them support, however feeble,—such systems are but castles in the air, schoolboys' bubbles, the delight of a body of ministers in a period of transition, but without the slightest substantial contribution to the faith and life of the generations to come.

VI.—LAST THINGS.

We have exhausted our space in the study of the first things. We must sketch rapidly the topics that remain. The last things embrace death, the middle state, the resurrection, and the Messianic judgment with its rewards and penalties. The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, but did not state a Protestant doctrine of the middle state. They concentrated their attention upon justification by faith at the beginning of the Christian life; they did not unfold the whole doctrine of redemption. The field of eschatology was left by them in a very obscure condition. They simply maintained the old church doctrine after they had stripped off the Roman Catholic errors. They made no advance at this point. Great changes have taken place in the Christian world since the Reformation. The neglect of infant baptism and church membership by the masses in Christendom, the opening-up of the heathen world in numbers greatly exceeding the nominal Christian world, have compelled earnest men to ask the question how infants can be saved, and how the heathen, any of them, may be redeemed in accordance with the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. Increased attention to Christian ethics and the doctrine of

sanctification has raised the question how men dying imperfect and unsanctified are to be sanctified. These questions are not answered by the creeds. They have been considered only in a very inadequate way in the traditional dogma. They demand a more thorough investigation and scientific statement. The Christian world is agitated on all these questions, and the theological crisis is largely due to these discussions. There is great need of patience, charity, independent and fearless investigation, while they are in debate. The doctrine of progressive sanctification after death is built on the Bible and the creeds. It is in conflict with traditional dogma, but not with any decision of the historic church. It is a doctrine which lies at the root of purgatory, but is not purgatory. It is a divine discipline, not a human probation. It is in harmony with all the doctrines that have been defined in the creeds. It banishes from the mind the terror of a judgment immediately after death, and the illusion of a magical transformation in the dying hour, and it presents in their stead a heavenly university, a school of grace, an advance in sanctity and glory in the presence of the Messiah and the saintly dead, which is a blessed hope to the living and a consolation to the suffering and the dying.

VII.—THE CHRIST.

Jesus Christ is the pivot of history, the centre of theology, the light and joy of the world. No age has been so intent upon the study of the person, life, and work of Jesus Christ as the present age. The life of Jesus has been the theme of the greatest writers of our day, and yet no theme is so fresh and inspiring. The profoundest theological treatises of the century have used all the powers of the human mind in their efforts to understand and to explain the unique personality of our Redeemer. The traditional dogma unfolded the Christ of the cross and the atonement wrought thereon, but the Christ of the throne and the heavenly mediation have been neglected. Modern Christology is unfolding the humiliation of Christ, the Kenosis of the second person of the trinity, the incarnation, the resurrection, the second advent of our Lord. All these phases of Christology are in course of evolution. They cast a flood of light upon the whole field of theology, and are gradually transforming every other doctrine. As Henry B. Smith well said : “ What reformed theology has got to do is to Christologize predestination and decrees ; regeneration and sancti-

fication; the doctrine of the church; and the whole of eschatology." There are new difficulties and contests about all these questions. German theology is agitated over the mode of the incarnation—whether it was instantaneous or gradual ; over the Kenosis, and the construction of the complex nature of the Redeemer. Anglican theology is agitated with regard to the virgin birth of our Lord and the nature of the resurrection body. Many of the Evangelicals are especially interested in the doctrine of the second advent. Each party is doing its work in the unfolding of some special section of Christianity. American Christianity is backward still in the department of Christology ; but ere long it will become the most absorbing, as it is ever the grandest, theme for the Christian Church, and the first things and the last things will be absorbed in the blaze of the glory of the Messiah.

VIII.—THE GAIN.

The fruits of this theological crisis can only be great, lasting, and good. The first things, the sources and foundations of Christianity, will be tested, strengthened, and assured. The living God will approach men who use all the media of divine influence, and grant them union and communion as never before. Vital union with the living God will make living Christians, a living church, and doctrines animated with holy living and doing.

The last things will cease to frighten weak Christians, and stiffen brave men into the rejection of such childish conceptions of the universe as prevail in the traditional dogma. They will become the hope and joy, the comfort and consolation, of manly, heroic Christians ready to do and dare for Christ and his kingdom.

Jesus Christ, in his unique personality, in the wonders of his theanthropic nature, in the comprehension of his work of redemption, will present himself to the consciousness of men as their loving Master and gracious Sovereign, whom to love, serve, and adore will be the bliss of living and dying. "To be well-pleasing to Christ" will be the one end and aim of the Christian world.

It is evident that the evolutions of Christian theology which have brought on the theological crisis are preparing the way for a new Reformation, in which it is probable that all the Christian churches will share ; each one, under the influence of the divine Spirit, making its own important contribution to the world-wide movement, whose goal is the unity of the church and the redemption of the world.

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